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# Street Art and Graffiti Should not Be Considered Vandalism

It is difficult to apply a single definition to what is considered Art. Whether it can or should be defined has been constantly debated. "The definition of art is controversial in contemporary philosophy. Whether art can be defined has also been a matter of controversy. The philosophical usefulness of a definition of art has also been debated." I believe street art should not be considered vandalism as long as it's done the right way, at the right place.

It is challenging to have a single standard definition for Art, largely due to the reason that the topic is subjective for both the artist and the audience that views it. Art may be defined as something that is skillfully done or something that incites emotion or insight. Art is also seen as that which has a visual impact and conveys a message and does not necessarily involve extreme skill or aesthetic. Art may be considered a medium or format that is used to make a statement or convey a message to an audience.

What is considered Art may be based on the artist's perspective, beliefs, culture, and imagination. It may also include what message the artists conveying to an audience. The audience may or may not view the creation with the intended or desired interpretation expected by the artist. This may be due to the audience's own perspective that is subjective; shaped by their own experiences, beliefs, culture, and imagination. Art is generally an expression of thought, belief, a message that is shared by the artist. "Art, therefore, is the human imagination in action. It is the artist's expression of ideas and feelings, reflecting the world through his/her eyes at a specific time period".

Based on the definitions of what encompasses art, graffiti is art. It is expressive, unique and incites emotion and debate. It is used to convey the artist's message and social commentary. Since it first started in the 1960's, graffiti was known as "tagging" linked to establishing gang turf and hip-hop culture. Tagging meant that names were scribbled or sprayed to identify boundaries. Based on this, a lot of people perceive graffiti being linked to gangs, crime, and violence. Also, tagging was not seen as an aesthetic to cities but rather regarded as giving dirty and unsafe look. One main argument for Graffiti is it not being considered art because it's illegally created on buildings without the permission of the owner, and that's when graffiti is considered vandalism and not art. "Even within graffiti culture, tagging is often overshadowed by murals or confused with other forms of graffiti marks like throw-ups (usually two letters consisting of an outline and a fill)".

However, graffiti has developed more than tagging since then. It is an art form that uses different styles of lettering, as a medium to give voices to unknown artists where they can

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express their ideas and commentary by showcasing their work to a wide audience. one cannot simply dismiss Graffiti as not being art solely based on its placement on walls or subways. It is a visual art form representative of aspects of life, social issues, politics, and culture.

There are a lot of famous graffiti artists, who consider graffiti as an art and not vandalism, but we will only focus on Banksy and Keith Haring. Banksy is an anonymous English street artist who has created multiple famous pieces, such as Girl With Balloon, Mobile Lovers, Well Hung Lover, etc. Banksy is an artist who does not make paintings for fame or money and no one knows what he looks like. On the other hand, Keith Haring has his face all over the internet, which isn't a bad thing by any means, it's just different than Banksy and his work is also different. Keith Haring also has a lot of famous work, like, Crack Is Wack, Radiant Baby, Andy Mouse, etc.

Banksy's famous piece of art "Girl With Balloon" was put up for auction at Sotheby's selling in 2018 and sold for \$1.4 million. As soon as it was sold, the painting started to self-destruct itself, by the shredder that Banksy hid inside the frame of the painting. "Now art experts think that it could be worth nearly double". This insider YouTube video also says that other people who already own Banksy's original have tried to shred their piece, assuming that the price will double, but unfortunately that wasn't the case and them shredding the piece dropped the value to \$1. In that same video, Accredited Senior Appraiser, Danielle Rahm says that there's a difference between Banksy destroying the painting than some random person doing it. Banksy is an artist, so he can do anything he wants and call it art. If we look at this situation, then there is no real value of art, the value is for the person who created it. He had no legal right to destroy that painting since it was already sold, but he still did it and there was no one to say anything about it, but if it was some random guy, he would probably put in jail right after that incident.

Art doesn't always have to be attached with a powerful meaning behind it, sometimes you just pay for the name, that is signed at the bottom right of that painting. This exact piece of painting is originally a street art which was made in 2002 on Waterloo Bridge in South Bank and on the side of that wall it said, "THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE" according to some people this is considered to be vandalism, but I believe is street art because it's done on anyone's private property, it's at the public bridge, which is owned by the public. This piece of art contains a lot of meaning, first is a painting of floating balloon going up and it was made on the wall of the stairs going up, "THERE IS STILL HOPE" probably means that she can still get the balloon if she goes up the stairs with it and catches it. Also, the only thing which is colored in this work is the balloon, it is painted red, which means love, dreams, and hope. Banksy is trying to send a message to the audience, to never give up in their lives, doesn't matter what the situation is. The balloon slipped out of the girls hand, which had a lot of meaning to her, but if she gives up and doesn't try to get it back, then she will never get it back, but if she goes up the stairs fast enough and catches the balloon before it gets any higher, then she can get her life back

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together. Just like that girl, Banksy is telling the audience, if you give up too soon then you won't achieve any goals in your life, but if you try your best, then you might reach that goal because there's still hope.

Keith Haring, another famous graffiti artist who was born in Connecticut and later moved to NYC, to express his talent in the subway stations and to show the people that street art isn't vandalism when it's done at a public place and doesn't harm anyone. He got fined and arrested multiple times but he always said, it's worth the pain. Most of his work is colorful and dancing characters in them. His signature figure is a crawling man with glowing symbols around it. That's how people differentiated his work from everyone else's because he never signs his work but always has some unique design to it.

One of the most famous Haring's work is "Radiant Baby", it was created in 1990 and is one of the most iconic and popular pieces. This piece of art will be found in almost all of Haring's works as a symbol that it's been done by him and not anyone else. According to a YouTube video made by TheArtBros, they think that it represents baby Jesus and everyone else around them is worshipping his. The Radiant Baby is the tag of Keith Haring because it symbolizes the honesty and purity in his work, just like a little baby is, and it shows the audience that there's nothing but the truth in his work. And in my opinion that is really big to send the right message through your work, because art is only expressed by what you draw, there are no words to define it. 'Babies represent the possibility of the future, the understanding of perfection, how perfect we could be. There is nothing negative about a baby, ever...The reason that the 'baby' has become my logo or signature is that it is the purest and most positive experience of human existence.'

Both of these artists, Banksy, and Keith Haring, have brought great graffiti culture to this society and to the youth. Yes, it is considered vandalism by multiple people and is highly discouraged, but if everyone starts to look at this as a crime and stop everyone from expressing their emotions through graffiti, then this society must be ready for all the other/real crime it will bring in. At the moment all these young people have been expressing their feelings by spraying the walls, and if they are stopped from doing that then they will be attracted to other crimes, like murders, stealing, and drugs, which is far more worse than just spraying few walls, because you can fix a wall by repainting it, but you can't bring someone back to life or make someone sober from all the drugs and alcohol they have gotten addicted to. There are good and bad things in most fields of work and if we only focus on the negative side then nothing positive would be done in this world. "However, in many cities across the globe, graffiti is produced predominantly by men. In this sense, graffiti — both the art and act — are generally perceived as masculine".

According to Shillington, graffiti is considered manly and that's exactly what my point was if we completely stop these people from expressing their emotions through graffiti then they might turn into criminals because for some people keeping emotions inside themselves isn't a thing

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and they have to let all those feelings out somehow. Most graffiti works have tags which cannot be understood by everyone, the artist put those tags on to mark their territory in a sense. When another artist goes to a wall to create his work and he sees that this block or area is tagged by someone else, he might just leave because you never know if it's done by a gang or just a normal artist, but most places/walls are shared by every graffiti artist.

Banksy's "Girl With Balloon" and Keith Haring's "Radiant Baby", both in my opinion are street art and not vandalism. Those famous pieces are worth a lot of money because it has some meaning to the society and it's just not something drawn by a person. Sure those pieces could have multiple meanings, but that's what art is all about, letting the audience use their imagination to figure out what something might mean, and if it's a good message or a bad one. Banksy's works don't usually have many colors to them but Haring does. Girl With Balloon only has one color, red, and that color is used to express emotions and feelings. On the other hand, Haring's Radiant Baby is done in red at some places and yellow on the others and also white. Red might be expressed as love, just like Banksy's, but yellow and white might have been chosen to contrast with its surroundings and to match with what other figures are doing in the art.

Most people have no idea what the real value of art is or they don't really care much about art because it's a luxury item and not a necessity of an average man in this society. Even the people who buy these expensive pieces of art, most of them don't care about what messages its sending or what it was made for, but mainly focus on the resell value of the piece and how much money they will make in a few years. "If you gave most people \$25 million and the choice to spend it on a six-bedroom house with spectacular views of Aspen or a painting by Mark Rothko of two misty dark-red rectangles, the overwhelming majority would choose the house". The value of art is mainly decided by its popularity and how many people are willing to buy it, like Banksy's "Girl With Balloon", its value doubled after the incident at the auction of it getting shredded. Since it was the talk of the town and the destruction was done by the creator himself, the value of that piece shot up. Street art isn't only valued because of the way it is made or who made it, it's also valued because of the risk those artists take since its illegal and no one can see you make it. That's why most artists go at night to create their work.

Street art and graffiti basically mean the same thing, with a slight difference. Street art is made for the public to see and understand and isn't always created illegally but on the other hand, graffiti is not created for the public to understand, but for other graffiti artists to understand and to see its value. Street art and graffiti are converted into vandalism when they are done on private property, but if it's at a public place then there should be no issue. Sure if it gets too much or it looks bad, then people should do something to stop it because it will drop the property value of that neighborhood, which isn't good. But if it's done at a public place then no one should have any type of problem with it, because they don't own the property to be able to

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say anything about it. If the owner says something about it, then it's no longer street art, but it's vandalism, which is illegal and it should be stopped because when a person owns something, it means that it's there and no one is allowed to do anything to it without the permission of the owner. Vandalism is a legal issue, especially when it's used as gang signs and signs which shows that this specific group of people own this area or a block, and that will definitely drop the price of the property, which is just not fair to those innocent families who live in those areas. Other than that, it's a free country and everyone has the right to do whatever they want with their lives and no one should stop them, as long as they aren't harming anyone else in the society.

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